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Message Text

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ACTION OES-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DOE-15 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NASA-01 NSC-05
SOE-02 SS-15 /090 W
----------095903 051110Z /13
R 041420Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4678
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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DEPARTMENT PASS NASA
PARIS FOR MORRISION/NASA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, TSPA, IT
SUBJ: U.S.-ITALY SPACE COOPERATION: SAN MARCO D

1. SUMMARY. DURING RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH GOI OFFICIALS, SCIATT HAS BECOME AWARE OF SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT THE ABILITY OF THE CENTER FOR AEROSPACE RESEARCH (CRA) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME TO MEET THE SCHEDULE SET FOR THE SAN MARCO LAUNCHES. WHILE WE HOPE THAT THE VISIT TO ITALY TWO WEEKS AGO OF NASA OFFICIALS HAS RESOLVED SOME OF THE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES, THERE REMAIN POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES OF WHICH NASA AND THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE BEFORE DECIDING ON WHETHER ADMINISTRATION FROSCH SHOULD VISIT ITALY. END SUMMARY.

2. MEMCONS OF SCIATT'S CONVERSATIONS WITH GOI UNDER-SECRETARY FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH POSTAL, PROFESSOR BOGLIO OF CRA, PROF. BUONGIORNO OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME AND MINSCI OFFICIAL VALENTE ARE BEING POUCHED. THESE CONVERSATIONS RAISED THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT CRA AND THE SAN MARCO LAUNCHES: CAN THE TECHNICAL WORK BE DONE ON TIME? CAN THE FINANCIAL AND MANAGE-
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MENT REQUIREMENTS BE MET ON TIME? WILL POLITICAL CIRCUM-STANCES PERMIT THE LAUNCHES TO OCCUR ON TIME EVEN IF THE TECH-NICAL, FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT OBSTACLES ARE OVERCOME?

3. NASA IS PRESUMABLY AWARE OF THE TECHNICAL, FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT DIFFICULTIES. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THE RECENT VISIT TO ROME OF NASA OFFICIALS GAETANO, NORRIS AND SPENCER (ABOUT

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WHICH THE MISSION WAS UNFORTUNATELY NOT INFORMED) HAS OVERCOME AT LEAST THE MORE OBVIOUS PROBLEMS AND HAS LED TO A MORE REASONABLE PROJECT TIMETABLE. EVEN IF THIS IS THE CASE, HOWEVER, WE REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT CRA'S ABILITY TO DELIVER BECAUSE OF POLITICAL OBSTACLES OF WHICH NASA MAY NOT BE AWARE.

4. THE BASIC POLITICAL PROBLEM IS THAT SAN MARCO IN GENERAL IS RUNNING INTO STRONG SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST OPPOSITION. THIS IS EVIDENT AT SEVERAL LEVELS: IN THE PARLIAMENT, WHERE INTER-PARTY CONSULTATIONS ON THE FIVE-YEAR SPACE PLAN HAVE RUN INTO SNAGS OVER SAN MARCO; AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME, WHERE THE PRESENT LEFTIST ADMINISTRATION IS REPORTEDLY NOT HANDLING DISBURSEMENTS OF MONEY FOR CRA WITH THE PREVIOUS EASE AND DISPATCH; IN THE NEWSPAPERS, WHERE BROGLIO HAS BEEN SEVERELY CRITICIZED BY THE COMMUNIST PAPER QTE UNITA UNQTE (JUNE 30); AND ON THE GOSSIP CIRCUIT, WHERE THE U.S. IS REPORTEDLY SUSPECTED OF SINISTER MOTIVES IN USING AN INDIAN OCEAN LAUNCH PAD AND IN QTE REQUIRING UNQTE PURCHASE OF EQUIPMENT BY CRA FROM ITT.

5. SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO SAN MARCO IS NOT FUNDAMENTALLY ANTI-AMERICAN IN ITS ORIGINS, ALTHOUGH IT IS CERTAINLY STRENGTHENED BY ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN SOME QUARTERS. WHAT IS HAPPENING IS THAT A PET PROJECT THAT HAS BEEN HELD CLOSELY BY BROGLIO AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS COMING UNDER PUBLIC SCRUTINY. THE ATTACK IN COMMUNIST PAPER UNITA IS LARGELY BASED ON LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS ABOUT ITALIAN R
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AND D PRIORITIES, AND THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN IN THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY IN A LONG TIME FOR THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO HAVE FULL DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES. COMMENT: ONE OF OUR DIFFICULTIES IN EVALUATING THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS IN OVER-COMING THIS POLITICAL OPPOSITION IS PRECISELY THE FACT THAT FROM AN ITALIAN STANDPOINT, IT MAY BE WELL FOUNDED. IT IS NOT CLEARNU TO US THAT ITALY BENEFITS SUBSTANTIALLY FROM ITS SPACE PROGRAM, WHICH IS VERY EXPENSIVE RELATIVE TO OTHER R AND D EXPENDITURES HERE. ALTHOUGH SAN MARCO IS FAR FROM THE MOST EXPENSIVE OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM, IT HAS THE DISADVANTAGES OF BEING ORIENTED TOWARD RESEARCH RATHER THAN IMMEDIATE APPLICATIONS AND OF PROVIDING LITTLE STIMULUS TO ITALIAN INDUSTRY. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ARE GOING TO HAVE A HADR TIME JUSTIFYING SAN MARCO TO THE OTHER PARTIES AND TO THE ITALIAN PUBLIC END COMMENT.

6. IF NASA BELIEVES THE TECHNICAL, FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT DIFFICULTIES CAN BE OVERCOME, AND IF FROM THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW SAN MARCO D IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR, THE MISSION WOULD SUPPPORT AN EFFORT TO OVERCOME THE POLITICAL OBSTACLES. THIS IS A CASE IN WHICH IMPLEMENTING THE QTE STRATEGY OF COOPERATION UNQTE WITH ITALY IS LIKELY TO BE COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT, BUT IF THE U.S.

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TECHNICAL INTERESTS WERE SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT AND THE CHANCES
OF SUCCESS REASONABLE, THE MISSION WOULD CONSIDER THE EFFORT
TO BE WOTHWHILE. IN THIS CONTEXT, A VISIT BY ADMINISTRATOR
FROSCH, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS BEING CONSIDERED FOR OCTOBER 3-4,
MIGHT BE VERY HELPFUL IF SUFFICIENT PREPARATIONS ARE MADE WELL
IN ADVANCE.

7. IN PARTICULAR, WE WOULD WANT TO BE SURE THAT A) CRA AND NASA
HAD AGREED TO A TECHNICALLY REASONABLE TIMETABLE FOR
SAN MARCO D: B) SOME STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO STRENGTHEN THE MANAGEMEN
T
AT CRA; AND C) THE GOI WAS AT LEAST NOMINALLY COMMITTED TO PER-
MITTING THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL TRANSFER. A VISIT BY THE ADMINISTRATO
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COULD THEN BE USED TO NAIL DOWN THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL SUPPORT
NEEDED AS WELL AS TO BROADEN PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE
PROJECT IS ABOUT. THE MISSION WOULD APPRECIATE NASA'S VIEWS ON
POINTS A)-C) AS WELL AS AN INDICATION OF HOW STRONGLY NASA FEELS
ABOUT GOING THROUGH WITH THE SAN MARCO D PROJECT. IN THE MEAN-
WHILE, WE SHALL TRY TO GET A BETTER READING OF THE POLITICAL
SITUATION HERE. WITH THIS INFORMATION, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE
TO REACH A REASONABLE CONCLUSION ABOUT A VISIT BY THE ADMIN-
ISTRATOR. HOLMES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPACE PROGRAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME14329
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780321-0744
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780897/aaaaddpr.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: dfec356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1834674
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S.-ITALY SPACE COOPERATION: SAN MARCO D
TAGS: TECH, TSPA, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/dfec356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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